

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9000
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0044

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINR, MPOL, MORG, HO
SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES PROMOTIONS AND TRANSFERS: CONSERVATIVES
CONSOLIDATE GRIP ON SDC

REF: (A) 77 TEGUCIGALPA 5760 (NOTAL), (B) TEGUCIGALPA 5860
(NOTAL)

1. A SMALL PROMOTION LIST WAS PUBLISHED BY THE
ARMED FORCES ON DECEMBER 17. THERE WERE NO PROMOTIONS TO
GENERAL RANK AND ONLY ONE (IN THE MEDICAL CORPS) FROM LT.
COL. TO FULL COLONEL. NONE OF THE LT. COLONELS ON THE
SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL WAS PROMOTED. NEITHER WERE THE
LT. COL. RANKS ADDED TO INFANTRY OR ARTILLERY ALTHOUGH THERE
WERE SEVERAL PROMOTIONS IN THE MEDICAL AND QUARTERMASTER
BRANCHES. CAPTAINS FARED SOMEWHAT BETTER WITH 15
INFANTRY AND 5 ARTILLERY PROMOTED TO MAJOR.

2. IN ADDITION TO THE THREE LT. COLONELS GIVEN MINISTERIAL
APPOINTMENTS (SEPTEL, ALL OF WHOM WERE ON
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THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC), THERE WERE OTHER
TRANSFERS, INCLUDING CHANGES IN EIGHT OF THE ELEVEN INFANTRY
BATTALION COMMANDERS. AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT WERE:
-- LT. COL. AMILCAR ZELAYA WHO HAD BEEN IN CHARGE OF THE
SPECIAL COMMAND THAT TOOK OVER THE TEXACO REFINERY
AND SECOND INFANTRY BATTALION COMMANDER REPLACES LT. COL.
FRANCISCO RUIZ AT THE ALSO IMPORTANT THIRD INFANTRY

BATTALION (SAN PEDRO SULA).

-- RUIZ BECOMES MINISTER OF DEFENSE. AS SUCH HE APPARENTLY REMAINS ON THE SDC.

-- LT. COL. HUBERT BODDEN MOVES TO THE ELEVENTH INFANTRY BATTALION IN CHOLUTECA (WHICH COVERS PARTS OF BOTH THE NICARAGUAN AND SALVADORAN BORDERS) REPLACING LT. COL. MARCO ANTONIO ROSALES WHO MOVES TO THE FIRST ARTILLERY BATTALION.

-- LT. COL. VICTORIO SANCHEZ IS THE NEW COMMANDER OF BODDEN'S OLD UNIT, THE TENTH INFANTRY BATTALION, STATIONED IN MARCALA AND RESPONSIBLE FOR TWO OF THE DISPUTED BORDER POCKETS WITH EL SALVADOR.

-- FORMER SUB-SECRETARY OF DEFENSE COL. ESTABAN ELVIR BECOMES THE NEW G-5 (CIVIL AFFAIRS).

-- LT COL. ISIDRO TAPIA, DIRECTOR OF THE FRANCISCO MORAZAN MILITARY ACADEMY IS BEING REPLACED BY FORMER MINCULTURE, LT. COL. EFRAIN GONLEZ MUÑOZ, WHO WILL APPARENTLY

ALSO JOIN THE SDC.

-- A NAVY COMMANDER TO REPLACE LT. COL. ERICK O'CONNOR, THE NEW MINCULTJRE, HAS YET TO BE NAMED.

3. NO OTHER CAPTAINS HAVE BEEN NAMED TO OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENTS FOLLOWING THE FIVE THAT HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED THEIR ORDERS (REF A). NEITHER WERE ANY OF THESE FIVE ON THE PROMOTION LIST, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE MORE COINCIDENCE THAN DESIGN.

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4. COMMENT: THE UPHOT OF ALL THESE CHANGES IS THAT THE MORE CONSERVATIVE LT. COLONELS WHO CONTROL THE 31-MEMBER SDC (REF B) HAVE FURTHER CONSOLIDATED THEIR POSITION. THE ABSENCE OF PROMOTIONS FOR THIS GROUP, WHETHER BY DESIGN OR NOT, MEANS THAT THE PRESENT EQUILIBRIUM ON THE SDC (26 OF ITS 31 MEMBERS WERE LT. COLS.) WILL NOT GREATLY CHANGE WHEN ITS NEW COMPOSITION IS COMPLETE. TWO OF THE SO-CALLED "PROGRESSIVE" LT COLONELS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM INFLUENTIAL INFANTRY COMMANDS (ROSALES TO AN ARTILLERY BATTALION AND RUIZ TO THE LARGELY ADMINISTRATIVE MINDEF). ROSALES IS NOT ONLY CONSIDERED SOMEWHAT SUSPECT AS A "PROGRESSIVE," BUT HIS BROTHER WAS ONE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE RECENT, UNLIKELY, ATTEMPTED COUP PLOT. ANOTHER "PROGRESSIVE" LT. COLONEL, ROLANDO MEJIA GARRIGO, WENT FROM G-3 TO A MINISTRY. LT. COL. ISIDRO TAPIA HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO GUATEMALA. THE OTHER TRANSFERS SEEM BASICALLY ROUTINE ROTATIONS.

5. WHAT ONE NEWSPAPER CALLED THE "CAPTAIN'S MOVEMENT" (AND MEANT BY IT CAPTAINS SYMPATHETIC TO THE "PROGRESSIVE" LT. COLONELS AND SOMEWHAT IMPATIENT WITH THE PACE OF ECONOMIC

REFORM AND PROGRESS, BUT BY NO MEANS RADICALS AND GENERALLY FRIENDLY TO THE U.S.) MAY BE BROKEN UP FOR THE MOMENT. THE MORE CONSERVATIVE LT. COLONELS (AND THIS TERM "CONSERVATIVE" INCLUDES OFFICERS WHOSE ORIENTATION VARIES FROM MODERATE TO RIGHTIST, BUT WHO ARE ALL CONCERNED WITH INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY) HAVE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS FORCED OUT GENERAL OSWALDO LOPEZ FOR HIS POPULIST POLICIES AND CORRUPTION, RETIRED A NUMBER OF OLDER COLONELS, ASSIGNED "PROGRESSIVE" COLLEAGUES TO POSITIONS OVERSEAS OR AWAY FROM INFLUENTIAL COMMANDS AND HAVE MANAGED TO MAINTAIN AN OUTWARDLY SOLID FAÇADE. HOW THEY REACT DURING 1978 TO THE PLANNED RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, AND INCLUDING THEIR VIEW OF A POSSIBLE MELGAR CANDIDACY, WILL BE ONE OF THE CRUCIAL FACTORS IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE YEAR. AN AIRGRAM DESCRIBING THE SDC AND ITS NEW

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MAKE-UP FOLLOWS.

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